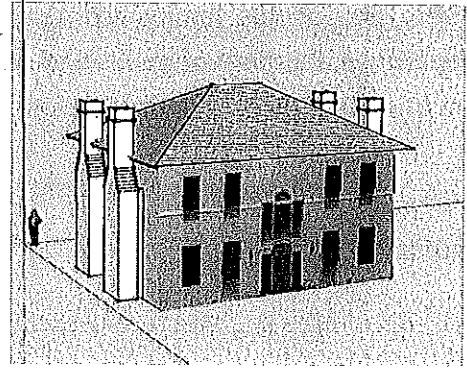


HIS 285/285W
Digital History:
Building a
Virtual St.
George's



Spring 2014
Friday 2-4:40
Rush Rhees 445 (Digital History Lab)

Prof. Michael Jarvis
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This course introduces students to some of the techniques of digital history, using the Virtual St. George's Project as a learning lab focused on practical applications of technology. Students will use a variety of software and historical sources to help create a virtual digital St. George's – a 400-year-old town with approximately 250 properties and historic buildings. The goal of the larger project is to build multi-layer 2D and selective 3D computer models of the oldest town in English America (founded 1612). Work will involve integrating different types of historical data into Excel and ArcGIS databases, independent research on specific buildings and property owners using manuscript historical sources and digital newspaper archives, "building" virtual 3D houses within the town using Sketch-Up, Maya, or Revit, reconstructing and furnishing historic house interiors using interior design software, and prototyping these digital constructions in Unity, a videogame design program.

Evaluation: Student grades will be based on full and efficient logging of my research time commitment (40%), the accuracy and quality of the research projects they do (40%), participation in weekly meetings and project discussion sessions (10%), and a final essay reflecting on the project, the skills they acquired while working on it, and on how digital history might expand and improve upon learning in general and the history/archaeology discipline in particular (10%). Alternatively, students can blog throughout the semester (one entry per week) as a substitute for this final essay assignment.

Students taking HIS 285W (to satisfy an upper-level writing requirement and/or history major requirement) will have the research time and project contributions each assessed at 30% and write a 12-15-page (double-spaced) paper addressing some aspect of St. George's history

(slavery, households, family, economy, historical archaeology, gender, etc.) or a theoretical and comparative appraisal of public and digital history as practiced in this Bermuda project and at least one other digital history website.

Reading:

Jarvis, *Bermuda's Architectural Heritage: St. George's* (Hamilton, 1998)

Seefeldt, Douglas and Thomas, III, William G., "What is Digital History? A Look at Some Exemplar Projects" (2009). Faculty Publications, Department of History. Paper 98.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/historyfacpub/988>

Recommended/Further Reading:

James Paul Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach us about Learning and Literacy* (rev. ed., London, 2007)

Michael Jarvis, *In The Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* (Chapel Hill, 2010)

Roy Rosenzweig, *Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age* (New York, 2011)

SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Feb. 7) – Getting to know Bermuda (a conversation with maps)

Week 2 (Feb. 14) – Getting to know St. George's – read Jarvis, *Bermuda's Architectural Heritage: St. George's*. Come with notes prepared to 1. Outline the town's key dates in terms of development and activities. 2. Demonstrate a familiarity with historical architecture and its evolution in Bermuda – be able to identify buildings from different periods and the key diagnostic characteristics used to date them. 3. Curiosity: pick 3 particular buildings, families, or subjects discussed in the book that you'd like to know more about – and perhaps think about what sources you'd use to learn more.

Weeks 3-4 Data Migration (Feb. 21, 28) - work with the St. George's Domesday and the Master Excel spreadsheet to create digital deed chains/property information for targeted households. Work also with the paper files and Old House Survey reports to add additional information. By the end, prepare notes on where there are holes or discrepancies in documentation.

Week 5: Additional Research (March 7): use the digital Bermuda Gazette database (post-1784), genealogical information, unintegrated sources on microfilm, 18th c. court records to gather more information about the houses you're working on and their respective families. Write this additional knowledge up in long form for inclusion in the STG Domesday and paper file and also input this information into the Master Excel file.

Week 6: Spring Break

Weeks 7-8 (March 21, 28): ArcGIS and 2D St. George's (with GIS specialist Robert Beutner) – instructional sessions on historic map overlays, modern St. George's, creating historicized representations of your research buildings, and using the Excel database to reflect historical events and data. Work with various historic maps and documents to posit changes over time to your research properties.

Weeks 9-11 (April 4, 11): 3D Renderings of your properties (Josh and Rob) – introduction to Maya or Sketch-Up to build 3D versions of your research properties – likely different versions reflecting modifications over time (footprint, façade, orientation, outbuildings, paint color). We will work with 19th and 20th c. sketches and photographs to enhance the accuracy of our portrayals, as well as derive correct dimensions from historic maps and modern GIS layers. I will also provide overlapping high-resolution photographs to merge and “drape” on your houses to improve appearances. For historic buildings that no longer survive or are in ruinous shape, we will discuss strategies for reasonable approximations of appearance.

Week 12: Going Inside (April 18): For standing historic properties with floorplans and at least one probate inventory, we will work with Home Designer to build a 3D CAD model of the house's interior layout and furnish it according to the items listed on a room-by-room basis. This exercise will help us visualize flow-through patterns, levels of privacy and specialization, crowding, display and conspicuous consumption, and degrees of racial segregation within households – and changes therein over time.

Week 13 (April 25): Individualized additional research: refinement of Sketch-Up models of St. George's houses using exterior photographs of your buildings, georeferencing models using ArcGIS imported footprints, and corrections of your individual entries within the Excel house database. Final class: discussion of course and project progress, submission of journals and final house models/databases and file folders.